

**STATE WATER RESOURCES CONTROL BOARD
BOARD MEETING SESSION – DIVISION OF WATER RIGHTS
FEBRUARY 23, 2017**

ITEM 16

SUBJECT

PRESENTATION BY THE SCIENTIFIC EVALUATION PROCESS GROUP ON THEIR REPORT TITLED CONSERVATION PLANNING FOUNDATION FOR RESTORING CHINOOK SALMON AND STEELHEAD IN THE STANISLAUS RIVER

DISCUSSION

In December 2012, stakeholders in the lower San Joaquin River watershed initiated the San Joaquin Tributary Settlement (SJTS) process. The SJTS was formed to develop voluntary proposals for water and habitat management on the lower (downstream of the Merced River to Vernalis) San Joaquin River and its tributaries— the Merced, Tuolumne and Stanislaus rivers—to address significant declines in native fish species and other ecosystem concerns that are the subject of current or future regulatory actions. As part of the SJTS efforts, the Scientific Evaluation Process (SEP) was started in March 2013, to identify and synthesize the best available science on restoring ecological conditions in the lower San Joaquin River and its tributaries, including restoration of sustainable native populations of fall-run Chinook salmon, spring-run Chinook salmon, and steelhead. SEP participants include: the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, National Marine Fisheries Service, American Rivers, The Bay Institute, Trout Unlimited, The Nature Conservancy, and others.

The SEP group started their efforts on the Stanislaus River and in November 2016, released a report titled, *Conservation Planning Foundation for Restoring Chinook salmon and Steelhead in the Stanislaus River* (Report). The Report is intended to provide a framework for ecological restoration efforts on the Stanislaus River. The Report proposes biological and habitat objectives for salmon recovery in the Stanislaus River; identifies stressors in the Stanislaus River that are limiting the attainment of the objectives; and suggests physical conditions necessary to achieve the Central Valley Project Improvement Act's salmon population doubling goal. The SEP group plans to develop similar information for the Merced, Tuolumne and lower San Joaquin rivers in the future.

The purpose of this informational item is for the SEP group to present the Report and to provide a status update on the SEP process to the State Water Resources Control Board.

POLICY ISSUE

None. However, the presentation could inform work on the update of the San Joaquin River flow objectives included in the Water Quality Control Plan for the San Francisco Bay/Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta (Bay-Delta Plan) (Phase 1 update of the Bay-Delta Plan).

FISCAL IMPACT

None.

REGIONAL BOARD IMPACT

None.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

None.

State Water Board action on this item will assist the Water Boards in reaching Goal 4 of the Strategic Plan Update: 2008-2012. Goal 4 is to comprehensively address water quality protection and restoration and the relationship between water supply and water quality.